



Edgar Cayce Canada Starting a *Spiritual Growth Study Group*

This information packet will help you in all phases of the Group starting process. In it you will find:

- ❑ Guidelines for setting up and hosting an initial meeting;
- ❑ Facilitator Guidelines for regular group meetings;
- ❑ Meditation Guidelines
- ❑ An historical overview of the *Search for God/ Spiritual Growth Study Group* work and explanation of the ideals and purposes of working together;
- ❑ An article by Herb Puryear, “Spiritual Growth in Small Groups”
- ❑ Suggestions for ordering the suggested text, *A Search for God*, and/or other material.

Starting A Group

Sponsoring a group is an exciting opportunity and a unique avenue of service to others. There are people everywhere who are seeking deeper and more personal spiritual meaning in their lives; your group may be just the avenue they are looking for. Study Group work is a tried-and-true format for developing spiritual awareness and attunement, understanding the true meaning of love in our everyday lives, practicing the fruits of the spirit, and enhancing psychic abilities.

If you are new to group work, it may be helpful for you to visit a group nearby to become familiar with both the material and the group process. But if a local group is not available, don't let that stop you; hundreds of people have followed these guidelines and the suggestions from their region study group contacts to begin their own groups.

Getting Help:

There are people and resources available in some areas to help you start a group in your area. If you haven't already done so, contact ECC's Study Group Manager by calling the toll free number 1-866-322-8209 or studygroups@edgarcaycecanada.com

Plan an initial Meeting:

- Decide on a date, time and location for an initial gathering. Set the date far enough in the future to allow time for publicity. Five to six weeks is optimal.
 - Most groups meet in the home of one of its members. However, some meet in church facilities, library meeting rooms, health center/store meeting rooms, or in other kinds of community facilities. You may choose to have your initial



meeting in a more public location, and then switch to your home or that of another group member for regular group meetings.

- If possible, the Study Group Coordinator or another volunteer familiar with Study Group work will attend the initial gathering for guidance and support.

Announcements/Publicity: (Some Suggestions)

- Invite any friends or acquaintances you think would be interested. This outreach may even attract enough people to start a group.
- Send a mailing. The Study Group Manager can mail/email a meeting announcement to ECC members and enquirers your vicinity.
 - Be sure to allow 5-6 weeks lead time for the mailing. Make sure the Study Group Manager has all the pertinent information, including meeting date, time, location, contact person, and directions.
- Place a small ad in the local paper or a brief notice in the “Personals” section. For example, “Group forming to study **Edgar Cayce** materials, with informational gathering on ____ (give date) ____ at ____ (time) ____ . If interested call ____ (phone number) ____.”
- Post announcements in your local area. Small posters (8-1/2”x11”) with an image of Edgar Cayce and space for adding meeting details and contact information are included in this handbook. They can be posted (with permission, of course) in local libraries, health food stores, like-minded churches, and in places frequented by the public, such as laundromats, community centers, etc.

Your First Meeting

The following are simply suggestions for your first meeting; you may have other ideas.

Keep the timing of the group simple; meet as long as you intend future meetings to be – two hours is optimal. You may allow for some informal discussion at the end of the meeting, however, keep this to a minimum, as you are setting the expectation for future meetings.

- Begin with a moment of silence followed by an opening prayer



- Have participants introduce themselves, perhaps sharing with the group how they became interested in the work of Edgar Cayce. Name tags might be helpful for the first meeting or two until everyone knows one another
- Discuss the purpose of Study Group work:
 - Include a brief history of Edgar Cayce and the A.R.E. in general, study group work specifically;
 - Go over the Study Group format and group expectations Introduce the *Search for God* or other texts; begin reading from the book if time allows, and discuss the information;
 - Choose an experiential exercise, or “discipline” for the coming week, i.e. agree to pray for one another daily
- Discuss day, time, and location for future meetings, as well as how leadership will be rotated.
- Meditate as a group

Now That You Are Underway!

Each ECC group is *autonomous*, establishing with the consent of its members all facets of its activities. The Spiritual Growth Program offers guidelines, particularly for new groups, but the final decision concerning what the group does and how it will operate is up to its members. Rotation of the meeting facilitator can help ensure equal participation among members. Also, one of the primary functions of the facilitator is to draw every member of the group into its discussions. A group’s success depends upon *full participation in the group process by all its members*.

Be aware that over time, attrition may reduce the original number in the group. This is a natural process of self-selection and you will find that others will be attracted to the work. People tend to hear about a group and want to join after you have established your group and have been meeting for a while.

It only takes two willing participants to begin studying and meditating together. Remember, if your group is small, that you can be *mighty small*. “Where two or more gather” might very well be the byword for an ECC study group. On the other hand, more than twelve may change the dynamics from being a “group” to being a “class,” with just a few of the members dominating discussions. Should the numbers increase to 15 or so, and remain that way for a period of time, that group may want to consider separating into *two* groups.

After a group has met for a period of two to three months, we encourage you to officially affiliate with ECC’s study group program who can provide you with an Affiliation form. Affiliation guarantees that future seekers will be directed to your group and they will all get the ECC mailouts for your area.



With the group officially established in computer records, the contact person will automatically receive periodic mailings, which may include newsletters, resource materials, and notifications of up-coming programs and events in your area that may be of interest to the group members.

Congratulations! You have taken steps that have proved to be one of the simplest yet most effective methods for spiritual growth and discovery of our times: Starting a Spiritual Growth Study Group.



SPIRITUAL GROWTH/ SEARCH FOR GOD GROUPS MEETING FORMAT GUIDELINES

The following guideline keeps the group focus on applying the purposes and ideals. The normal length of time for a group meeting is about 2 hours: 20-30 minutes for business, experiments and dream discussion; 60 minutes to read and study the *A Search for God* material; 10 minutes for a break; and 20-30 minutes for meditation time. Group facilitation generally rotates either by the week, the month, or the chapter of study. **(These are just guidelines, your group is unique and a format will evolve over time.)**

Begin on time, even if everyone has not yet arrived.

Begin with **a moment of silence**, which helps to still the mind, set aside cares of the day, align the mind with spiritual forces, and move group consciousness to a common purpose. The facilitator may end the silence with brief prayer, the current affirmation, or by saying the Lord's Prayer.

20-30 Minutes

Business, Contributions Collection, Announcements

These group "housekeeping" activities are brief. Contributions are voluntary and support the on-going work of the Spiritual Growth/Search for God Program.

Discipline/Experiment Sharing

Group members share their experiences with applying the past week's experiment, including new insights, what was helpful or what hindered. *The focus is on principles rather than details of what happened.*

Dream Discussions

These discussions are an option for groups interested in keeping journals and analyzing dreams.

60 Minutes

Discussion of A Search for God Material

This is led by the group facilitator, who may have read the material and prepared some points for discussion beforehand. Please keep in mind that being facilitator does not mean having the answers, dominating the discussion, or being a guru, but means *acting as the guide, being aware of each member present*. It is important to maintain a relaxed attitude, as well as the balance and harmony that nurtures action of the Creative Forces through all the members.

An effective way to work with the material is to have group members take turns reading one or two paragraphs at a time, then have the group *discuss* what has been



read. The facilitator's role is to keep the group focused and to encourage each member to participate. *Asking specific questions helps to stimulate thoughts and ideas.* Members speaking briefly helps everyone have a turn at sharing so that the meeting is not dominated by any one member.

Contribute what has been *applied* and found helpful instead of just what has been thought about or read. *Listen carefully to what is said and what is meant.* Focus on similarities rather than on points of dissension. It is not necessary that all agree; it is important that each member honor the others' quests for understanding. If there are moments when the discussion seems to be heading towards argument, the leader calls for a moment of silence in order to restore balance through which the Presence is operating. Remember too, that these meetings *are not intended to be group therapy or encounter sessions*; rather, they offer spiritual growth opportunities.

There is another successful process of working with the material. A portion of text is selected, first read silently by each individual, then read aloud by the facilitator while the others focus on listening - hearing and feeling what is meant. Next, going clockwise in a circle, each has an opportunity to share **feelings** about the material just read. The facilitator helps members focus on sharing feelings. Some may choose to pass, especially at first. Open discussion follows after all individuals have had an opportunity to share their feelings.

Choosing the Week's Discipline and Experiment

This is an important activity in which the group agrees to apply the information in some way until the next meeting. Ideas may be offered by the group members. The facilitator makes the choice from these suggestions, or the facilitator offers a suggestion for group agreement. Make the experiment specific and concise, something to do that relates to the material just shared in the *A Search for God* text or original readings, rather than something just to think about or read.

10 minutes

Brief Break

Time to stretch, walk around, or have a drink of water.

20-30 minutes

Meditation and Prayer for Healing

The suggested format is outlined in this handbook. Meditation is usually led by the facilitator, although upon occasion and upon request, another member may lead.



A MEDITATION PROCEDURE

From the Edgar Cayce Readings

Prayer is talking to God. According to the Edgar Cayce Readings, meditation is the other half of that conversation – listening to God. The following meditation format was suggested in the readings and has helped thousands of people meditate successfully.

1. Set a regular time of day for your meditation session. The regularity makes it more likely you will remember to meditate. Plus, you may find it easier to get your mind focused and quiet more quickly as you develop a consistent habit. Choose the time when you are most likely to be alert and able to remain focused on your spiritual aspirations and ideals.

At first you may want to have relatively brief meditation sessions. Do whatever is comfortable to you. Later, you can expand this period to the length of time that you find to be most helpful.

2. Choose from among the many aids for attunement; they help you create the right frame of mind and assist in focusing on your spiritual aspirations. There is no set routine for this step. The readings suggest doing whatever would prepare your mind for receiving a most honored guest. Choose whatever will help you to relax and quiet the mind. Have a moment of silence to purify the mind and heart before approaching the God within.

Many people have found some of the following to be helpful.

- A. Reading from the Bible or other spiritual text
 - B. Relaxing your head and neck through gentle exercises (e.g., forward and backward; side to side; circling one way and then the other)
 - C. Breathing exercises:
Conscious, focused breathing. The Cayce readings recommended that three times, breathe in through the right nostril while holding the left closed and exhale through the mouth; then three times inhale through the left nostril while holding closed the right nostril, then exhale through the right
 - D. Chanting
 - E. Burning incense
 - F. Listening to soft inspirational, quieting or centering music
 - G. Soft or indirect lighting
3. Raise the awareness of being protected by praying: “As I open myself to the unseen forces that surround the Throne of grace, beauty, and might, I throw about myself that protection that is found in the thought of the Christ.”
 4. Pray. Take a few moments to attune your mind through prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is often used to attune the mind and the body to the Providence of God. Also, there are



many forms of prayer that can be used: petition, praise, thanksgiving, forgiveness, etc. Choose each day what seems most appropriate.

5. Repeat several times the *affirmation* you have chosen for meditation. An affirmation is a positive statement offered to the Divine within that you would like manifested in your consciousness. For example, in each lesson of the *A Search for God, Books I and II*, and the 262 series of the Study Group Readings, a specific affirmation is offered, keyed to the concepts of that spiritual growth step. After the affirmation is read and studied, it is then offered to the Divine within for bringing it into fruition in the life of the person meditating. Real meditation begins when one is in a state of listening. You will begin to feel the meaning of the words rather than just saying them mechanically.

If you discover that your attention has wandered or been distracted, don't despair. Gently bring your attention back by silently repeating the affirmation and return to the listening state silence.

Keep a positive attitude and attention; despite the frequency with which distractions may arise (internally or externally), effects are still taking place within.

6. At the end of this period of silence, pray for others. This is a reminder to give as you have received.

Some groups begin this prayer time by praying for each group member, passing the light around the circle as each person calls the name of the person directly to their left. Then comes prayer for others. If there are people who have specifically asked for your prayers in healing or for help in changing a condition, then add your prayer to theirs. For those people who have not specifically asked, but for whom you have a concern, bless them and imagine them surrounded with light. This process allows the recipients to maintain their free will. It's always a good thing to add "God's will be done."

* * * * *



A Brief History of Study Group Work

In 1931, Edgar Cayce's dream of having a hospital based on the readings and an educational center (Atlantic University) to study the readings came to an abrupt end as a result of the stock market crash of 1929. Both the hospital and the university had represented long-cherished aspirations of Edgar Cayce, his family and close friends, and their loss was a devastating blow. Edgar Cayce was deeply depressed at the calamitous turn of events.

In September of that same year, a number of Edgar and Gertrude Cayce's close associates gathered for the purpose of discussing how to prevent the work of the readings from being lost. That group's general desire was for guidance as to how they, individually and collectively, might be of help to Mr. Cayce. Admittedly, a few of them wished to be taught how to be psychic so they could give readings in the same way through which Mr. Cayce had helped hundreds over the years. Others had in mind the possibility of turning the existing readings to commercial value. Still others, whose lives had been deeply impacted by the spiritual guidance received from their own readings, desired to know of ways they could impart such values to others.

At the group's request a reading was given, the results of which surprised everyone. The guidance was that they all begin right where they were as a group and learn to cooperate – a term which came to mean much more to them than merely learning to work harmoniously with each other. In the truest sense, it meant to learn, as a group, to co-operate, *to work in tandem* with Spirit. Apparently these particular people, all of whom had been together in previous incarnations, had been called by Spirit to come together at that time for specific helpful purposes.

After that Resulting from that initial gathering, seventeen people began meeting regularly and, in time, the group was designated as Norfolk study group #1. They received and studied the contents of subsequent readings from Mr. Cayce and were instructed to make application in their own lives of the principles offered to them as individuals and as a group before any more information would be given. Further, the group was urged to put the material into readable and “study-able” form – to be offered to others who would be attracted to the work – sharing the concepts and principles in the readings and *the growth in awareness* that each member had experienced from his or her own application efforts. It took a total of eleven years, but the group's persistence resulted in the publication of two slim volumes titled, *A Search for God*, Books I and II. (Three chapters were given also for Book III, though time did not permit their being verified by Mr. Cayce's clairvoyant consciousness before he passed away.) Books I and II became the basic “texts” that outline the readings' statements concerning the nature of God, the nature of humankind, and the relationships that each of us has in Spirit with the Creative Forces.

Following World War II, after Edgar Cayce's death in 1945, his elder son, Hugh Lynn, began traveling through all of North America, making contact with people who had expressed interest in the work and encouraging everyone to give the group program a try. He was personally convinced that the guidelines given in his father's readings for small group



dynamics were perhaps the most important aspect of the entire Edgar Cayce legacy. Hugh Lynn's engaging personality and his willingness to give public lectures and to appear in various media to "spread the word" won the hearts of thousands. Ultimately, there were others – in particular, Elsie and Bill Sechrist, both of whom had received personal readings from Mr. Cayce – who were willing to add their efforts to Hugh Lynn's by traveling extensively both in this country and abroad. Today, seventy-five years after the formation of Norfolk #1, there are A.R.E. groups around the world.

The program received added impetus when, beginning in the 1950's, the name "Edgar Cayce" became familiar in the publishing world. More and more people were personally investigating the readings and expressing their experiences in writing. Jess Stearn, Gina Cerminara, Noel Langley, Harmon Bro and others told powerful stories about the impact of the Cayce readings upon their lives. The remarkable depth and scope of the readings became a magnet to people from every walk of life. All who contacted A.R.E. were told of the group program and its remarkable aid to those wishing to know more about the spiritual relationship everyone has with their Supreme Being. This resulted in the proliferation of study and growth groups all over the world.

The reading given for Norfolk group #1, September 14, 1931, with 17 persons in attendance, became the first of 130 readings in what was later designated as the 262 Series or the Study Group Readings. The series, while specifically addressing the members of that first group and the work they had been drawn together to accomplish, represents the impetus – clearly, Spirit Itself – behind the worldwide movement of study and growth groups that exist today. The 262 Series became the basis for *A Search for God*, Books I and II.

This two-volume text presents a systematic lesson-by-lesson growth in spiritual awareness. Discussion in the group focuses on understanding and applying this material in a practical manner. Although many metaphysical groups are centered on teachers, masters, or gurus, this unique material insists that everything a person needs to grow lies within themselves. In this sense, each person becomes his or her own teacher and each become a teacher to others in the group as the results of personal application are demonstrated.

Study Group Books and Resources

The following resources are available at ECC's The Higher Shelf and can be reached on the toll free line 1-866-322-8209 or bookstore@edgarcaycecanada.com

- 1) *A Search for God*, Books I and II
- 2) *Experiments in a Search for God* by Mark Thurston, PhD
- 3) *Experiments in Practical Spirituality* by Mark Thurston, PhD
- 4) *Twelve Lessons in Personal Spirituality*, by Kevin Todeschi
- 5) *A Search for God Paraphrased*, by L. Nelson Farley



If your group chooses to study something other than the *Search For God* material, we suggest looking at these possible alternatives:

- 1) *Your Life: Why It Is the Way It Is and What You Can Do About It*, by Bruce McArthur
- 2) *The Intelligent Heart: Transform Your Life with the Laws of Love*, by David McArthur and Bruce McArthur
- 3) *Meditation and the Mind of Man* by Herbert Bruce Puryear, Ph.D. and Mark Thurston, Ph.D.
- 4) *Meditation: The Light from Within*, by Harry Glover
- 5) *Healing Through Prayer and Meditation*, by Meredith Ann Puryear
- 6) *Edgar Cayce's Story of the Old Testament*, by Robert Krajenke This is a trilogy on the creation story and souls' progression through the time of Jesus:
 - Vol I. *From Birth of Souls to the Death of Moses*
 - Vol II. *From Joshua to the Golden Age of Solomon*
 - Vol III. *From Solomon's Glories to the Birth of Jesus*
- 7) *Revelation: A Commentary Based on a Study of Twenty-three Psychic Discourses*
- 8) *Edgar Cayce on the Revelation: A Study Guide for Spiritualizing Body and Mind*, by John Van Auken
- 9) *Edgar Cayce's Story of the Soul*, by W.H. Church
- 10) *The Edgar Cayce Primer*, by Herbert Bruce Puryear, Ph.D.